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Member Agencies

Blackstone Valley
Advocacy Center

Domestic Violence
Resource Center of
South County

Elizabeth Buffum
Chace Center

Women's Resource Center

Task Force

Sisters Overcoming
Abusive Relationships

Affiliate Members

Center for Southeast Asians

Crossroads Rhode Island

Family Service of Rhode Island

McAuley Ministries –
McAuley Village

Progreso Latino

YWCA Rhode Island

To: Representative Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Lucy Rios, Executive Director
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 4, 2025

Re: Support for House Bill 5046

On behalf of our network of member agencies and SOAR, our taskforce of survivors, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence appreciates this opportunity to express our **support for House Bill 5046**. This legislation strengthens our state statute related to the distribution of sexually explicit images without consent by including those images generated or altered by digital devices.

Though RI has an existing statute that penalizes the distribution of revenge porn, the language as written does not explicitly cover those victims whose images were digitally generated or altered without their consent. Meanwhile, the proliferation of digitally generated images (deepfakes) is increasing exponentially, with researchers pointing to a **550% increase in deepfake videos available online between 2019-2023**.¹ Of those tens of thousands of videos, **ninety-six percent are pornographic - overwhelmingly targeting women and often depicting victims being raped or otherwise sexually abused**.^{2,3}

Patterns of domestic violence are marked by power and control. As advances are made in technology - namely, the growing power of artificial intelligence programs - survivors of domestic violence too often experience technological abuse. Abusive partners maintain power over their victims by threatening the release of their sexually explicit images to family members, places of employment, or on social media. Broadened access to technological programs that create deepfakes means that a survivor could be threatened with the release of sexually explicit images that not only did they never consent to sharing, but were entirely generated or altered without their consent.

As artificial intelligence advances every day, our state needs to act urgently to prevent further instances of this form of technological abuse from causing harm. Technology is a weapon that people who use violence wield to maintain control over their victims. Survivors in our communities deserve clear and strong legal protections against these growing threats of technology.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

¹ Noel, K. (2024). Journalist Emanuel Maiberg Addresses AI and the Rise of Deepfake Pornography. In *Columbia University Institute of Global Politics*. <https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/news/rise-deepfake-pomography#:~:text=Another%20study%20in%202023%20by,percent%20of%20them%20targeting%20women>.

² Thompson, P. (2024). Deepfake porn is a huge problem – here are some of the tools that could help stop it. In *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/deepfake-porn-huge-problem-ai-tools-help-stop-2024-2>

³ Smith, H., & Mansted, K. (2020). What's a deep fake? In *Weaponised deep fakes: National security and democracy* (pp. 05-10). Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25129.6>